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EUROPE AND THE OLD WOUND

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In medieval Europe, clerical authority constituted an entire civilizational structure that fused politics, economics, knowledge, law, and the collective imagination into a single pervasive and dominant order. The cleric in medieval Europe was a judge, a legislator, a landowner, an interpreter of the universe, and an exclusive intermediary between the individual and eternal salvation. The excesses of ecclesiastical crusading zeal, along with excommunication, burnings, and inquisitorial tribunals, therefore cannot be reduced to a single cause. They emerged from a long convergence of fear, power, interest, historical memory, and the psychological structure of European society itself.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Europe entered an immense political vacuum. Central authority collapsed, cities disintegrated, feudal

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territories fought one another, and Germanic, Slavic, and Norse peoples reshaped the continent amid prolonged disorder. In the midst of this devastation, the Church was the only institution that remained organizationally, educationally, and administratively coherent, and it gradually assumed many of the functions once performed by the Roman state. Over time, the Church evolved from a spiritual authority into a civilizational substitute for the state itself. Bishops became rulers, the pope became a political actor intervening in the fate of kingdoms, and the clergy developed into a class standing above society.

This transformation generated an intensified sense of spiritual election and sacred authority. An institution that regards itself as the exclusive guardian of divine truth naturally tends to see many doctrinal and intellectual disagreements as threats extending beyond mere differences of opinion, since, in its own understanding, they concern the preservation of the common faith and the unity of the religious community. From this perspective emerged within ecclesiastical consciousness the concept of the *Christian body*: the idea of Europe as a single spiritual entity whose strength and stability could be weakened by doctrinal division or fragmentation.

Free opinions were therefore understood as cracks whose effects might spread throughout the religious, social, and political structure. Every doctrinal system has the right to distinguish between what it regards as consistent with its foundations and what it regards as a departure from them. The crisis began when some ecclesiastical institutions expanded the range of intellectual and theological disagreements treated as existential threats requiring exclusion and violent punishment. Preserving the unity of the Christian body eventually became a justification for cruelty itself, recast as a form of sacred guardianship.

In such an atmosphere, severity could sometimes be interpreted as vigilance in matters of faith, while mercy or tolerance might be regarded as negligence that opened the way to the disintegration of the community and the disturbance of the general religious order. As the sacred became increasingly intertwined with political authority, fear of difference expanded, and in certain periods the defense of doctrine moved from the realm of intellectual and theological debate into a struggle over the survival of the order itself.

The encounter between Christianity and pagan societies is another deep root of this history that often goes unnoticed. European ecclesiastical consciousness took shape within an intensely unstable and diverse

environment. Christianity entered a world interwoven with ancient local pagan traditions, Germanic, Slavic, and Norse mythologies, and deeply rooted tribal customs. The picture became even more complex with waves of Germanic migration from the east and north. Some of these peoples carried warrior pagan traditions, while others embraced non-Catholic forms of Christianity, especially Arianism, which spread among several Germanic peoples, including the Goths and Vandals.

The struggle within early Europe was therefore also a struggle over who possessed the authority to define Christianity itself and who had the right to represent the continent's emerging religious and political order. Because the Church had lived for centuries with the consciousness of being a persecuted minority within the Roman Empire, it developed an acute defensive mentality grounded in the idea of a continuous struggle against the forces of darkness. Once it acquired power, this historical fear could turn into an aggressive impulse. Those who had been persecuted yesterday could become persecutors today, sometimes with greater severity than their former oppressors, because wounded memory, once armed with power, can transform old fear into a project of absolute domination.

This helps explain the persistent obsession with purification. Remnants of paganism, new philosophies, alternative readings of scripture, tendencies toward interpretation, or independent rational inquiry could all be treated as signs of Satan infiltrating society. The matter concerned more than doctrine; it reflected a siege mentality that feared the entire structure might collapse if the door to disagreement were left open. A person who imagines the world as a permanent battlefield between God and Satan may come to regard cruelty as a form of worship and to see burning and torture as protection of society rather than crimes against it.

Medieval Europe also lived under immense psychological pressure: famines, epidemics, the Black Death, recurring wars, short life expectancy, and a persistent fear of hell and divine punishment. In frightened societies, people seek rigid certainties that offer a sense of security. Hence the prevalence of images of a wrathful God, eternal hell, and demons watching human beings at every moment. In such an atmosphere, fanaticism can become a means of psychological reassurance: the harsher a person is toward those regarded as deviant, the more secure he may feel about his own salvation. Burnings were not always merely punishments; they could also function

as collective rituals for releasing inner terror, as though society were attempting to purge its fears by sacrificing the different.

From an anthropological perspective, the Inquisition and public executions can be seen as forms of collective purification that compensated society for its helplessness before nature, death, and disease. Europeans of the period possessed limited means of explaining or controlling the world: there was no advanced medicine, no mature experimental science, and few effective means of resisting catastrophe. Amid such helplessness, punitive rituals could give the community the illusion that it had regained control over chaos. The dissenter, the alleged witch, the philosopher, the ascetic critic, and the religious reformer could all become scapegoats upon whom society projected its fears and sins, before eliminating them in a public spectacle that restored the community's sense of cohesion.

Politically, the papacy was engaged in a vast struggle with kings and emperors over sovereignty in Europe. The famous Investiture Controversy between pope and emperor clearly demonstrated that the issue extended beyond religion: it was also a struggle over who possessed the right to appoint bishops and control the political legitimacy of the continent.

The Church therefore used excommunication and declarations of heresy as formidable political weapons. When a pope declared a king excommunicated, the king's legitimacy could be shaken, and his own subjects might turn against him. Excommunication thus became a fully fledged geopolitical instrument.

Nor was repression merely random or emotional. It became systematic, codified, and institutionalized. The inquisitorial tribunals functioned as organized judicial and investigative mechanisms designed to protect the unity of Christendom and prevent schisms that might threaten the continent's religious and political structure, particularly during periods of crusading warfare and major conflict. The investigation of conscience and surveillance of thought thus became part of governance itself.

Economically, the Church was among the largest landowners in Europe. It collected tithes, sold indulgences, controlled vast agricultural wealth, and rested upon an enormous financial structure. Many senior clerics lived lives of luxury far removed from the ascetic ideals of early Christianity. A number of movements subjected to persecution therefore represented an economic threat alongside their doctrinal challenge: they attacked ecclesiastical corruption and wealth and called for a return to poverty

and austerity. The sale of ecclesiastical offices itself became a major avenue of corruption, to the point that religious positions could sometimes be bought and sold much like political privileges.

Knowledge, too, was almost entirely monopolized. Literacy was largely confined to the clergy, scripture was read in Latin, which most ordinary people could not understand, and education was concentrated within ecclesiastical institutions. Control over minds therefore formed an essential part of the Church's power. Attempts to explain the universe or nature outside the ecclesiastical framework could be accused of witchcraft, heresy, or rebellion against the divine order. The deeper fear was not philosophy or science in themselves, but the loss of control over human minds.

It is more fitting to recognize that the catastrophe did not arise from religiosity alone. It arose from the fusion of the sacred with absolute power in the absence of adequate ethical, intellectual, or institutional restraints. When a religious institution becomes simultaneously a state, a financial empire, a security apparatus, and the monopolist of salvation, opposition to the ruler can become opposition to God Himself, and fear can become an everyday creed.

Many features of modern Europe from strict secularism and rebellion against the Church to the exaltation of reason and the intense sensitivity toward religious authority cannot be deeply understood without recalling the long centuries during which Europeans lived under the weight of ecclesiastical repression, inquisitorial tribunals, and the fear of heresy and sacred punishment. Modern Europe did not emerge through a calm philosophical transition from faith to reason. It emerged from a prolonged civilizational trauma in which fear, monopoly, and guardianship accumulated until rebellion against the old structure erupted on a vast scale.

The medieval European experience reveals a recurring human pattern: when authority claims a monopoly over absolute truth and combines sacred legitimacy with power, wealth, and fear, it tends to produce extremism with remarkable regularity. When human beings believe they rule in the name of God, they may lose the ability to see other human beings at all. The person who differs from them ceases to appear as a human being and becomes a threat that must be removed in order to preserve the world as they imagine it .

Europe's Transformation into Modernity

As Europe entered the nineteenth century, these transformations began to assume a more complex and profound form. Enlightenment ideas converged with the Industrial Revolution, and philosophical rebellion against ecclesiastical authority developed into a complete civilizational structure that reshaped the human being, the state, and the world. During this period, many concepts that had previously performed religious functions became secularized. Salvation came to be associated less with heaven and increasingly with material progress, while history itself came to be understood as an inevitably ascending path led by modern European civilization.

With the rise of the industrial bourgeoisie and the new nation-states, Europe began transferring many of its old certainties into modern forms. Progress replaced salvation in the afterlife, while the nation, race, and at times science itself assumed the position of new sacred absolutes. Social Darwinism then provided racial and class superiority with a scientific veneer in place of the old theological one. A growing European conviction emerged that a continent superior in industry and civilization possessed the right to lead the world and reshape other peoples according to its own model.

Out of this climate, modern colonialism emerged as something more than military or economic expansion.

It gradually became a civilizing mission that claimed a monopoly over civilization and progress, reproducing in a new form some of the older psychological structures rooted in a sense of centrality and exclusive possession of truth. The instruments of the new age, however, were no longer inquisitorial tribunals and excommunication; they were the factory, the university, the army, the laboratory, and industrial capital.

This industrial and capitalist accumulation, accompanied by the exaltation of nation, race, and power throughout the nineteenth century, built up an immense force of competition and aggression within Europe. The continent that had attempted to escape its old religious wars seemed to be approaching, in a new form, an explosion even more violent and comprehensive—one that would later manifest itself in the world wars that devastated Europe and the wider world.

Medieval Europe had lived within a complete civilizational structure formed by the fusion of religious authority with collective fear and by the alliance of the sacred with politics, wealth, military power, and monopolized knowledge. The effects of that period therefore penetrated deeply into the European psyche and later contributed to shaping

modernity, colonialism, the world wars, and the modern international order itself. Many features of the contemporary world cannot be understood without understanding those long centuries in which Europeans were formed by fear of heresy, fear of hell, and fear of thinking beyond the ecclesiastical framework.

Medieval Europeans lived under a heavy system of surveillance that almost penetrated the conscience itself. Alongside outward obedience to the Church, the inner human world was also expected to submit: intentions, doubts, interpretations, and sometimes even passing thoughts. Such an environment did not produce genuine obedience; it produced a complex psychological condition of social division and coerced hypocrisy. People learned to conceal their true thoughts in order to survive. Words no longer necessarily expressed what lay within, because a mistake could lead to imprisonment, torture, or public burning. Over time, social deception itself became a survival skill.

The Inquisition damaged human trust itself. Informing on a neighbor, relative, or friend could become a means of survival or of gaining favor with religious authority. A society whose members fear one another cannot

produce healthy inner security. A deep psychological wound consequently formed within Europe, leading Europeans to regard with suspicion any authority claiming a monopoly over absolute truth. An important part of modern European sensitivity toward religious authoritarianism can be traced to this painful experience: Europeans came to fear the return of an institution that polices the conscience in the name of God more than they feared atheism itself.

This experience produced what might be called a European fear of the authoritarian sacred. This helps explain why modern European religiosity, in many of its forms, appears individual, quiet, and detached from rigid organizations. Even many religious Europeans practice their faith as a personal relationship rather than as a collective project of rule and domination. Civilizational memory has not easily forgotten the image of a Church that once burned people in the name of salvation.

From this long accumulation of tension, European modernity began to take shape. Modernity was a psychological and philosophical eruption against centuries of guardianship. The Renaissance restored importance to the human being after centuries in which people had been made to feel small, sinful, and powerless before religious authority. Art once again

celebrated the body, life, and nature; philosophy began restoring confidence in human reason; and the religious Reformation shattered the Church's monopoly over scripture and spiritual knowledge.

The Enlightenment later elevated reason to the position of supreme authority. Modern philosophy became a long project of liberation from historical fear rather than a collection of merely abstract reflections. Europeans no longer wished to receive truth from a closed sacred authority; they sought to subject everything to criticism, experience, and examination. Descartes began with methodical doubt, Voltaire fiercely attacked ecclesiastical intolerance, Rousseau rethought society and sovereignty, and Kant made reason a standard of human autonomy.

The modern European state was therefore born as a reaction to religious wars more than as the fruit of philosophical tranquility. The Thirty Years' War, for example, was among the bloodiest catastrophes in European history. The continent increasingly came to feel that allowing religion to retain political power meant allowing massacres to continue indefinitely. Europeans thus began moving toward the idea of the secular state, which monopolized political violence and prevented religious communities from

transforming doctrinal disagreements into permanent civil wars.

Yet modernity carried a profound contradiction from the beginning. The Europe that rebelled against the Church's monopoly over truth continued to manufacture absolutes in other forms. The idea of the chosen people became the superior nation, religious salvation became civilizational salvation, and the missionary calling became a civilizing mission. The European who emerged from ecclesiastical authority carried much of the old psychological structure into the new age and redirected it toward new ends, far removed from the image of a human being who suddenly breaks free from the past and becomes perfectly balanced.

European colonialism was therefore more than an economic project for plundering gold and resources, although plunder was central to it. It was also a transformed continuation of an older mentality of domination. Europe began to see itself as the center of the world and as possessing a natural right to reshape other peoples. The "white man's mission" was not far removed from the earlier logic of saving lost souls. The discourse had changed: instead of speaking of saving people from unbelief, it now spoke of saving them from backwardness and primitiveness.

The European states that had practiced some of the harshest forms of religious intolerance at home were often the same states that led the great colonial projects. Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain carried with them an inflated civilizational sense of superiority and viewed colonized peoples as human material to be forcibly reshaped rather than as equal peoples. Christianization, education, the redrawing of maps, and the plundering of resources thus merged into a single project that regarded Europe as the highest model of humanity, entitled to lead the world.

Many of the methods employed in the colonies were psychological and political extensions of earlier European experiences of repression, purification, and exclusion. A continent long accustomed to hunting heretics began hunting “savages” and “primitives” beyond its borders. The aggressive energy once expended within Europe was gradually redirected outward as modern laws began to restrain violence at home.

This legacy created a global wound whose effects remain present today. Many peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America remain suspicious of Western discourse about human rights and democracy because their historical memory recalls that the same powers now speaking of freedom once occupied their lands,

plundered their resources, and killed their people in the name of civilization. The relationship between the West and the non-Western world therefore continues to carry a profound tension that cannot be understood without returning to those centuries of history.

Modern European nationalisms then reproduced absolutes in a more explosive form. As religious wars receded, nation, race, and state began to assume the status of new sacred entities. Europe, believing that it had freed itself from fanaticism, created new forms of fanaticism that proved even more lethal, now empowered by modern science, industry, and technology. Nazism and fascism emerged from a long history in which Europeans had repeatedly classified human beings into hierarchies and justified violence in the name of a greater mission.

The two world wars exposed the dark face of European modernity. Scientific reason, which had liberated humanity from many old constraints, also became an instrument of immense destruction. Extermination camps, chemical weapons, mass bombardment, and ethnic cleansing demonstrated that modern humanity was capable of producing an industrial hell surpassing much of the brutality of earlier ages. Europe, after long accusing the Church of producing terror, discovered

that reason severed from ethics could become colder and more ruthless than religious fanaticism.

At that point, humanity began to feel that it stood on the edge of collective suicide. Out of this horror emerged the idea of constructing a new international order capable of restraining great powers and preventing another global explosion. The League of Nations was the first attempt, followed by the United Nations after the Second World War as an effort to establish a global legal framework capable of preventing the catastrophe from recurring. Universal human rights, the prohibition of wars of aggression, and the right of peoples to self-determination all emerged from the profound civilizational shock experienced by the world after centuries of religious, nationalist, and imperial wars.

Symbolically, the United Nations can be read as an attempt to restrain the European monster that had erupted twice and nearly devoured the entire world. Europe, which had produced a large share of modern warfare, finally attempted to impose legal and ethical restraints upon itself and others. The modern international order thus contains within it an implicit acknowledgment of the failure of earlier European history, even when that acknowledgment is not always openly stated.

Yet the wound did not disappear. Modern Europeans continue to carry a deep sensitivity toward absolute discourses, whether religious, nationalist, or ideological. This helps explain the emergence of various philosophical currents that questioned grand narratives and became suspicious of claims to comprehensive truth, from nihilism and certain forms of existentialism to postmodernism and deconstruction. A human being who has witnessed how intellectual absolutes, when fused with power, can become instruments of exclusion and violence naturally becomes more suspicious of every certainty that seeks to monopolize the interpretation of the world, humanity, and history.

Nietzsche's famous declaration of the "death of God" should therefore not be understood as a simplistic proclamation of atheism. It can also be read as an expression of the death of the ecclesiastical image of God that had suffocated Europe for centuries. Modern Europe was not always celebrating the disappearance of metaphysics; it was also attempting to escape a painful religious memory in which the sacred had become associated with repression, punishment, and surveillance.

The reflective observer would do better to see European modernity as a long journey through

wounds, fear, rebellion, and the reshaping of humanity and the world a journey that exceeds the simplistic image of reason triumphing over ignorance. With the benefit of hindsight, I would say that one of the gravest mistakes of modern Europeans was to imagine that they had freed themselves from the idol, while in reality they were transferring sacredness from the Church to the nation, from theology to race, from the clergy to the state, and from salvation in the hereafter to material progress.

The European experience reveals a harsh truth: when human beings flee oppression without addressing its deepest roots, they may reproduce it under new names that are more attractive and more sophisticated. The history of Europe, from the Inquisition to the United Nations, therefore cannot be reduced to a simple passage from darkness into light, as simplified textbook narratives often portray it. It is a winding history filled with wounds, transformations, and reversals, and the entire world continues to live within its consequences today.

Europe, Civilizational Power, and the Question of Historical Agency

But how did modern Europe take shape? More importantly, how did this small continent, emerging from centuries of religious wars and internal

fragmentation, manage to impose its dominance over civilizations older than itself and more deeply rooted in demographic and spiritual terms?

Modern Europe did not achieve global dominance merely because it possessed weapons, ships, or industrial superiority, for military power alone is insufficient to build long-lasting empires. European colonialism was not an event detached from the continent's internal history. It was the external extension of profound psychological, political, and intellectual transformations that had begun in the Middle Ages and later matured through religious wars, intellectual revolutions, secularization, and the rise of the modern centralized state. Europe did not enter the wider world simply as an invading power; it did so after reshaping itself internally through centuries of conflict, violence, organization, and the reconstruction of authority.

This raises a deeper question: how was Europe able to produce such a formidable civilizational machinery, capable of subjugating much of the world? Explaining the fall of colonized peoples merely in terms of their weakness reduces history to a simplistic formula and turns other civilizations into passive entities, whereas the reality was far more complex and intertwined.

Europe entered the modern age after undergoing an extraordinarily violent internal experience: religious wars, inquisitorial tribunals, struggles between Church and state, social revolutions, major philosophical transformations, and finally a comprehensive reorganization of violence, economics, and knowledge. These centuries gave Europe an exceptional capacity to construct centralized states, administer armies, develop intelligence systems, control resources, and harness science in the service of power. Colonialism did not suddenly emerge with gunpowder; it arose from a long historical laboratory in which Europe learned how to organize power and transform it into an institution.

By contrast, the civilizations that confronted Europe were experiencing crises of their own, although these crises did not always conform to the simplistic image imagined by some contemporary narratives. In India, for example, certain popular and religious conceptions widespread in parts of traditional Indian society may have contributed to a psychological susceptibility to awe before unusual displays of power, extraordinary figures, and the capacity to bestow gifts or exercise control, sometimes interpreting such qualities as signs of spiritual presence or a distinctive cosmic rank. This may have contributed, in some contexts, to the

acceptance of the foreign colonizer. The idea of the avatar, along with conceptions of divine powers manifesting themselves in diverse human or cosmic forms, may have made segments of popular consciousness more inclined to associate material or symbolic superiority with some form of election or higher power.

Yet Hinduism cannot be reduced to this dimension without serious distortion. It is an extraordinarily complex and diverse world encompassing philosophical, spiritual, and social currents that range from profound contemplative asceticism to dense popular symbolism. India itself is an immensely complex civilization, containing multiple and sometimes contradictory philosophical, spiritual, and social traditions. Nevertheless, some prevailing intellectual and social structures such as a rigid caste system, a spiritual tendency toward individual liberation, and widespread acceptance of cosmic hierarchy may have made society less prepared to construct a unified political resistance against a centralized and highly organized colonial machine.

A substantial part of traditional Indian thought was concerned with questions of inner liberation, release from the cycle of suffering and desire, and the refinement of the self, more than with building a

confrontational state or developing a geopolitical philosophy. This does not imply absolute civilizational weakness; it reflects a difference in civilizational priorities. Civilizations do not all move in the same direction. Some emphasize spiritual equilibrium, others social harmony, and others imperial power. Yet when a spiritually oriented civilization fragmented internally confronts an expansionist industrial power possessing immense experience in military and political organization, the balance of power will generally favor the latter.

British colonialism exploited India's divisions with remarkable skill. It studied India's social structure more effectively than some of its own local elites did, used class and sectarian divisions to its advantage, encouraged conflicts among different communities, and then presented itself as a force of order and stability within a highly diverse and fragmented environment. Colonialism triumphed through more than physical strength or greater brutality; it had learned how to transform knowledge of societies into an instrument for dominating them.

European power first penetrated the other through maps, missions, journeys, studies of languages and religions, customs, and social structures before entering with military force. Orientalism, in some of

its political and colonial manifestations, became a subtle eye of European empires: it studied human beings before subjugating them, dissected societies before controlling them, and searched for their internal fractures before armies were set in motion. The spy did not always arrive dressed as a soldier; he might appear as a traveler, an explorer, a scholar of religions, or a student of social structures, genealogies, and local customs.

China presented a different case. Confucian philosophy had long emphasized social harmony, the regulation of relations between ruler and subject, and the preservation of ethical balance within the state. This vision gave China a remarkable capacity for civilizational stability over many centuries, though it did not drive it to the same extent toward developing a colonial and expansionist mentality resembling the modern European model. China tended to regard itself as a self-sufficient civilizational center rather than as a universal project for forcibly reshaping the world.

Yet explaining China's weakness before the West merely through Confucian tranquility would also be reductive. In the nineteenth century, China confronted European powers emerging from the Industrial Revolution with enormous naval and technological superiority, along with complex global financial and

commercial networks. The Opium War, for example, was more than a military confrontation; it was a collision between two profoundly different civilizational models in their understanding of economics, power, and the world.

The story of the Islamic world was more painful. It possessed a rich philosophical, theological, and scientific heritage, and philosophy in its early period formed part of a broad civilizational project connected to science, the state, caliphal courts, the translation movement, and institutions of knowledge. Under the pressure of conflict surrounding philosophy and the narrowing of the space in which it could operate, however, it gradually receded from a broad civilizational enterprise into the work of individuals and limited schools. Its influence on civilizational and political action consequently diminished over time.

The Islamic world therefore entered the modern age possessing an enormous intellectual heritage but lacking a vibrant philosophical presence capable of reshaping the state and society and generating historical power. Much intellectual activity had turned toward commentaries, glosses, and the repetitive study of inherited texts, while Europe was reconstructing the concepts of the state, the social contract, sovereignty, and the modern economy. At the very moment Europe

was producing Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu, large parts of the Islamic world were immersed in internal crises, struggles among ruling powers, and an increasing disconnection of their elites from the great transformations occurring across the world.

This civilizational and political fragility later manifested itself in a series of treaties and international privileges that constrained the Ottoman state and gradually opened its territories to European influence. Certain agreements, including the ill-fated London arrangements, along with foreign privileges and European financial and military interventions, became a legal expression of the growing imbalance of power between a rising Europe and a declining Islamic world. Colonialism began when the state lost the ability to protect the independence of its economic, political, and civilizational decision-making.

The decline of the Islamic world therefore cannot be explained by the absolute absence of philosophy. A crucial factor was the absence of an effective political and social philosophy capable of connecting knowledge with statecraft and the construction of power. An intellectual vacuum never remains empty: when a nation fails to produce its own vision of the

world, another will eventually impose its vision upon it.

It is equally important to avoid the opposite illusion: turning Europe into a demonic entity inherently superior to the rest of humanity. Europe prevailed because it passed through a long sequence of harsh transformations that pushed it to develop instruments of control and organization to an exceptional degree. The fire that once burned doctrinal opponents and dissidents within Europe was also the fire in which the modern state, the military machine, the bureaucratic mentality, and eventually the global colonial order were forged.

Perhaps one of the deepest civilizational differences between the modern European experience and some Eastern traditions lies in the direction toward which human existential energy was channeled. While broad currents of Indian thought were occupied with inner liberation and release from the suffering of the self, and parts of Chinese wisdom focused on building ethical and social harmony, the modern European mind gradually turned toward another struggle: the struggle to master nature itself.

Europeans emerged from long centuries marked by harsh climates, epidemics, famines, and instability, and increasingly came to see genuine liberation as

something achieved through mastering the world rather than adapting to it. From this emerged the modern instrumental vision that linked knowledge with power, science with control, and progress with the ability to reshape nature, humanity, and society.

Amid this immense drive toward technological and material mastery, the question of the inner human being and the question of the human other sometimes receded before the obsession with subjugating, organizing, and exploiting the external world. Many colonized peoples consequently came to be viewed as part of a domain to be controlled and reshaped according to the modern European model rather than as civilizational subjects of equal standing.

In other words, Europe learned through its internal wars how to construct repression as a system, and later learned how to restrain that repression through laws and institutions after it had nearly consumed the continent from within. European modernity therefore carries a remarkable contradiction: it is simultaneously the child of violence and of rebellion against violence. The contemporary observer would do well to understand colonialism as the product of a vast imbalance in history, civilization, knowledge, and organization rather than as a mere military event. Peoples fall above all through the way their internal

crises interact with rising external powers—through the convergence of their own weaknesses with the strength of their adversaries.

The last few centuries have shown that abstract virtue alone is insufficient to make history. The movement of civilizations is also bound to their ability to transform their ideas, institutions, and visions of the world into effective power in reality. Nations that fail to produce the instruments of action, organization, and knowledge remain vulnerable to being directed from outside, regardless of the spiritual depth or intellectual richness they possess.

